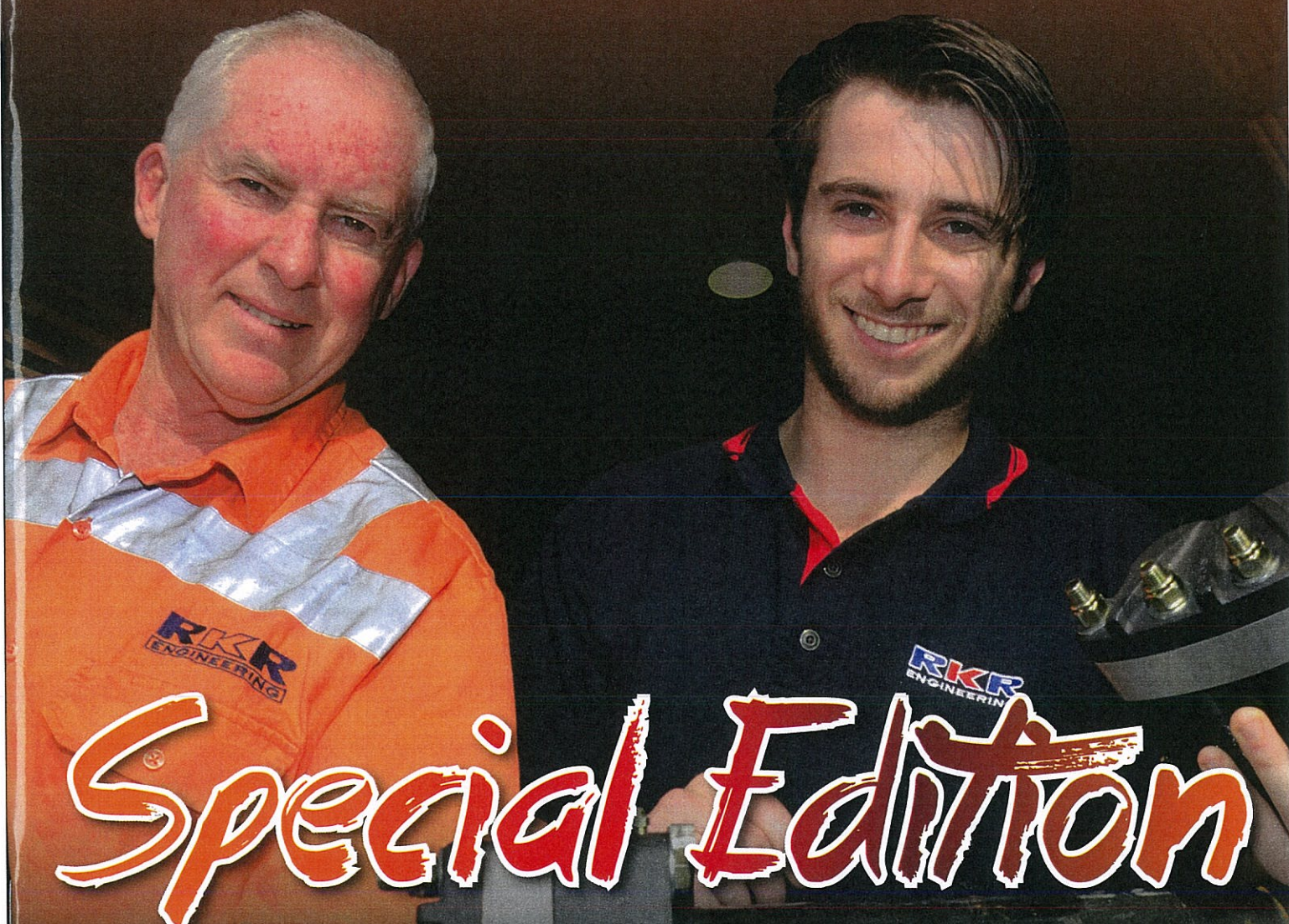


BUSINESS®

Resource & Lifestyle

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Special Edition

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Crusade for Change

A powerful alliance of non-profit organisations is on a quest to inspire and empower more employers to give teenagers a go, starting with connecting with them at school.

The Business Education Community Alliance, funded by both the Federal and NSW governments, identifies, fosters and provides ongoing support for a range of programs that help students make the successful transition from school to work, training or further study.

Ian Palmer, CEO of the Schools Industry Partnership – the Alliance's Penrith arm – says while there are many businesses in Sydney's west supporting teenagers, the number falls short of making a significant impact on the teenage unemployment rate which is nudging a high 28 per cent in some communities. Technically, he says, people are deemed employed when they work only two hours per week. So when these figures are taken into account, there are pockets in Western Sydney where an estimated 40 per cent of teenagers are unemployed or underemployed.

"We are on a genuine crusade to let people know it is quite easy and profitable for businesses to help address this problem and we can show them how," says Palmer. "If employers and their staff love their industry, we will help them find a way to impart that – to share their skills and passion. Students inspired through time spent at workplaces become viral marketing recruitment campaigns on social media, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to employers."

According to UK research, students who recall having four or more career interactions with employers are five times less likely to be unemployed or not engaged in further education or training at age 19 to 24 years. And the Australian Workplace and Productivity Agency reveals employers in surveys routinely rank work experience as among the most important attributes they need in their staff. The Agency's Future Focus report, released in March this year, highlights Vocational Education and Training in Schools programs play an important role in helping young people transition from "learning to earning".

The Alliance assists thousands of young people with their progression through school to further education, training and employment in the Blue Mountains and Western Sydney areas of Parramatta, Blacktown, Hawkesbury and Penrith. The Alliance consists of three government-funded agencies – the Schools Industry Partnership (SIP);



The Alliance's John Watters, Stephen Frost and Ian Palmer

BREED - Education, Employment & Economic Development, servicing the Blacktown Region; and the Australian Schools Industry Partnership (AusSIP).

The Alliance is concerned a high number of teenagers are "falling through the cracks" progressing from school to work or further education. It bridges that gap by helping to establish partnerships between schools, businesses and the community. The Alliance's innovative projects have proved so successful many of the programs have been rolled out on a State or nationwide basis.

AusSIP Executive Officer John Watters says kids learn more in one week on the job than they can sometimes learn in the classroom over several months, "despite the best efforts of teachers". "We need to be looking to the future, not only for altruistic reasons, but for pure pragmatic, economic reasons for our own businesses," says Watters, who was a teacher himself for eight years.

"At the end of the day if business, education and government don't all sit down at the table and acknowledge that we all have a role to play, then 10 years down the track we are still going to be complaining about skills shortages, about kids not having the right skills and about an economy that isn't as productive as it should be. We all have a vested interest in making these things work."

According to the 2011 Federal Government report *A Shared Responsibility: Apprenticeships for the 21st Century*, the Australian economy recovered from the most recent global economic downturn

more quickly than expected, benefiting from elevated commodity prices and high levels of public investment. But the report reveals as the focus of the economy shifts towards recovery and growth, there is concern that our economic growth



A Metals and Engineering student in training

will be constrained due to skill shortages. Areas of concern include engineering, construction, other traditional trades, and the community and aged care sectors. "All levels of government and industry will need to work to address labour and skills shortage issues and consider long term skills needs," the report warns.

Palmer argues that employers are the lynch pin to making a real difference and says it is a "tragedy" that Australia has massive skills shortages yet rising youth unemployment. "Industries are desperate for instant results to fill skill gaps



Today's youth, tomorrow's workforce

and are bringing in skilled workers from overseas on 457 visas, leaving our teenagers languishing," he says. "This is not a good recipe for a bright future. We have lost our way and we need to train up our teenagers via apprenticeships, university pathways and internships. There is a shortage of teenagers in a lot of industries, particularly talented, motivated and energetic teenagers."

A pivotal part of the Alliance's work is starting conversations with employers on how to coach young people. Their mission is not just to get students work ready, it's also about helping employers to become youth ready.

BREED Managing Director Stephen Frost believes some industries experiencing skills shortages don't always sell themselves to their best advantage. He cites transport and logistics as a prime example, with the interchange in the Blacktown area between the M2, M4 and M7 resulting in a lot of warehousing "springing up around the motorway".

"If you get into those enormous tin sheds of LG or Myer – they are huge places that are so advanced," he says. "It's all about electronics, robotics – it's state-of-the-art but parents think of it as the old storeman and packer days and say 'I want better for my kids'. The industry needs to sell themselves and get more involved with schools and career advisors to make them aware, not only how the jobs have changed over the years but what the career opportunities are. They need to show entry level school leavers where careers in transport and logistics can take them, and that's around the world."



Novotel Rooty Hill's Sharon Abbott with Tourism student and award recipient Stephanie Mudge

Palmer says the Alliance can help each and every employer – whether that is a five-minute exercise or an hour assisting them in the development of a program that best suits their business. There are many highly-effective ways businesses can support local young people. In addition to work placement and work experience opportunities, popular examples include:

- Offering guest speakers to provide insights into the industry and career advice

- Holding mock interview sessions
- Presenting demonstrations to share skills
- Welcoming students on workplace tours
- Taking part in school-industry projects
- Employing students in school-based apprenticeships or traineeships
- Participating in a local careers expo
- Mentoring a student or group **G**

National Quest to Inspire

Work Inspiration is a new national employer-led campaign that makes work experience for students more meaningful, relevant and inspiring. Targeting 14 to 19 year olds in fulltime education, the campaign recognises that traditional work experience, in existence in Australia for about 40 years, is tired and needs reinventing.

Adapted from a UK model and initially piloted in Western Sydney by the Business Education Community Alliance, Work Inspiration has now been tested in every State of Australia. With backing from foundation corporate partner National Australia Bank and other partners The Smith Family and the Foundation for Young Australians, more than 1,000 employers and their staff around the country have so far embraced the campaign. The key to the program lies in its motto: "Turning work experience into work inspiration."

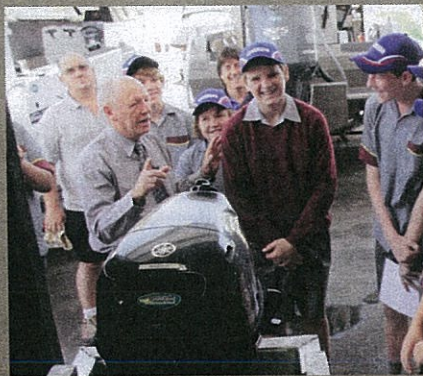
Lisa O'Brien, CEO of the Smith Family, says Work Inspiration is about mobilising resources from businesses and bringing opportunities into schools. She says this can only benefit young people, particularly those in disadvantaged socio and economic communities.

"This program allows staff in organisations to connect and link with young people – our potential future workforce," says O'Brien of the program that is tailored to suit individual workplaces and employees. "It's our impression and experience that work experience is currently not giving kids a real sense of possibility and excitement about career paths and about potential employment pathways. The success for Work Inspiration will entirely rely on the commitment and engagement of business."

Pilot Work Inspiration employers include Yamaha, Rural Skills Australia, McDonalds, Agforce, ARUP, GrowCom, City Wide, Stockland, Queensland Museum, Visual Industries Suppliers Association, and Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia. In addition to providing students with real-world experience, the program is by default providing employers with a mechanism to screen potential future employees.

David Kassulke, General Manager of A J Bush & Sons says: "It's a great way for people to know what you do and then consider that and then make plans towards joining your organisation which addresses your recruitment issues through to the future."

Michelle Templin, Workforce Development Coordinator with GrowCom says all the industry members she contacted to be involved in Work Inspiration were very excited about the program and the benefits it offered them. "From an industry perspective it improved the image of the industry, which is what we had aimed to do," Templin says. "But actually, from an employer's perspective, it also exposed them to potential employees. Some of them took them on in traineeships."



Work Inspiration students enjoy their time with Yamaha

Nicole Richardson, an RTO Manager with McDonald's, agrees her company can look at the program and see how it can be used as a pre-employment tool. "We are actually getting young people into the organisation and allowing them to see what makes everything happen behind the scenes," she says. "They also learn about themselves, their own career goals and what is it they want to get out of their future career. It's about giving students a success story, whether it be a great success or a small success and they learn you can have bumps and challenges along the way but you can still be a successful person."

Richardson says the effect on staff involved in the program has been "really surprising". "It was the fact that students took an interest in what they were doing, how they were successful in their organisation and what learning they had done after leaving school, up until their current position," she says. "They were a little bit chuffed I guess."

The success of Work Inspiration is underpinned by School Business Community Partnership Brokers who help build vital relationships to enable special experiences for students. One of these Partnership Broker organisations is BREED. Managing Director Stephen Frost says Work Inspiration is about empowering employers to transform work experience into an opportunity for them to excite young people. He says when students traditionally

undertake work experience some busy host employers spend little time preparing for their visit, not realising it is an opportunity to create a talent channel for their business. Students may spend time undertaking mundane, uninspiring tasks and end up being discouraged from pursuing a career in that industry. Young people can then deliver an informal PR campaign once they return to school, sharing negative messages about the work with their peers.

"Employers may say something like 'I forgot you were coming – sit in the corner while I work out what I want you to do'," Frost explains. "The kid thinks, 'cricket, I'm really welcome here'. Having business motivated and involved is good for the kids, it's good for the business and good for the industry. You may be the person that flicks the switch for the young person."

Work Inspiration is geared to not only teaching students' technical skills, it also aims to drive home the value of ethics and team work. AusSIP Executive Officer John Watters says an additional aspect of the program is the fact it shows the back end and diversity of a business. "You look at Woolworths for example, or a large retailer, it's not just about customer service," he says. "They've got accountants in the background, they have lawyers, people in marketing, media, transport and logistics, people in maintenance. That's what Work Inspiration does – it opens up these opportunities that people don't necessarily see at the front end and that are usually not offered in current work experience."

The campaign encourages businesses to move away from the traditional approach of one student to one employer. Experience shows when organisations take on small groups of students, the young people enjoy the opportunity to collaborate, problem solve and socialise – also known as "discovery learning". Students end up figuring out answers to workplace queries themselves, relying less on employees who may be challenged by constant interruptions.

Schools Industry Partnership CEO Ian Palmer says another approach is for a cluster of employers, for example in an industrial park or main street, to share the hosting responsibility, allowing students to rotate through a range of businesses. He says when organisations make simple, small changes to the way they host students, the impact can be enormous. "One public utility decided to take business administration students on a trip to see their dams and pipes," Palmer says. "This helped make the clerical work they were processing more relevant and they ended up feeling more connected to the industry." **G**

Hands-On Fun Tackles Skills Shortage

The traditional sign manufacturing industry has morphed into an exciting new world where virtually any materials or objects – including entire aeroplanes – can be transformed into works of art. Addressing an urgent need to attract young employees, the Visual Industries Suppliers Association (VISA) is embracing Work Inspiration by devising an exciting three-day program for Year 10 students.

system called TVET – can emerge as second-year apprentices. "In today's environment, we can pretty much guarantee those kids who are involved in the training program will come out of school and we will be able to get them a job tomorrow," says Harper, who plans to roll out the program in other parts of Sydney. "Most young people think of the sign manufacturing industry as a guy up a ladder with a paintbrush but it has gone in a new direction. People are out there printing and wrapping an aeroplane, a Lamborghini or a Corvette. The sign industry is getting stronger and stronger because everywhere you look there is



VISA students apply their new skills

Sign manufacturing & design students show off their T-shirts



Embracing the Work Inspiration program is one way the sign manufacturing industry is addressing this shortfall of expertise. For the pilot program VISA set up its own workshop next door to its office in Epping, with all the latest machinery, software and expertise to give the students the chance to test their newly-acquired skills. The students also visited two different businesses – Art and Soul which specialises in design and full-colour printing; and Gunneen Signs which works on corporate signage and is a leader in engraving and profile cutting, making coats of arms for Australian embassies around the world.

At the site visits the students interviewed the owners about their own work experiences, later creating career boards back at the workshop using computers, large format printers and Adobe software. The students were also set a task of producing a banner or poster to advertise the industry at their school. The finished products

were displayed in May at the Visual Impact PacPrint exhibition in Melbourne, visited by thousands of people.

Harper says the three-day exercise allowed the participants an entree into the "fun parts of the industry". "The students also had the opportunity to laser print directly onto their mobile phones or covers and they created their own T-shirt designs, personalised name signs and stickers," says Harper, who plans for the Work Inspiration program to be expanded in close association with TAFE colleges. "At the end of the day the students had something in their hands they did themselves from start to finish." **G**

In a pilot program staged in May, seven western Sydney Catholic high school students were given a unique insight into the sign manufacturing and graphic design industries with hands-on experience in printing, cutting and engraving. The program was so successful five out of the seven students have expressed an interest in undertaking a training program while they are still at school over the next two years, with the view to entering the industry.

VISA General Manager Peter Harper says students who start their training through school at TAFE – a

signage – the side of a bus, a taxi, a road sign. As one of our member's byline says, 'a business without a sign is a sign of no business'."

Concerned about an "extreme skills shortage", VISA conducted a survey earlier this year of the traineeship and apprenticeship requirements of Australian sign manufacturers. Of the 600 businesses that responded, the survey revealed between 400 and 500 apprentices could be employed by them tomorrow, if they existed in the workforce.

WORK INSPIRATION INSIGHTS

The program encourages host employers to have brainstorming sessions with their staff to devise interesting and exciting ways to maximise the students' time. Three "insight tools" are supplied to them by Partnership Brokers to help them get started, developed after discussions with young people, employers and representatives from the education sector.

INSIGHT 1 ALL ABOUT ME

This ensures each young person spending time at a business has a one-on-one conversation with a host employer or employee about what they are interested in and are good at both inside and outside the classroom. To avoid the conversation turning into a mock job interview, businesses are given a Personality Glossary for the student to complete, to help structure the chat and identify their individual traits, attributes and interests. The personality profile helps the student to work out the types of jobs they might be suitable for and are worth exploring.

INSIGHT 2 LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES

This aims to provide students with an idea of the wealth of different opportunities and job roles available within the business and industry they are visiting. The host employer is encouraged to facilitate the young person to meet and talk to as many people doing a variety of roles in their organisation. Students learn about skills an employer is looking for and it brings a relevance to the related subject they are studying at school or college.

INSIGHT 3 CAREERS HAPPEN

Students have the opportunity to interview an employee who closely fits their own personality profile, to learn about their career journey. The aim is to show students that careers don't usually progress in a linear way and often involve set-backs that provide valuable lessons. This insight also responds to the fact many employers often find school leavers have unrealistic expectations when they start, and lack the determination to progress through training and to seize development opportunities.

www.workinspiration.com.au



Chatting with employers is vital

Try Before You Buy

In Australia 52 per cent of people fail to finish their apprenticeships – a huge waste of training time and resources. According to the 2011 Federal Government report "A Shared Responsibility: Apprenticeships for the 21st Century", reasons for non-completion emerging from research include



Student Rebecca Marco (left) with CMRI's Danielle Gull

"workplace or employer issues, lack of support, low wages and not liking the work".

However, many employers do not realise they can benefit from students starting their trade training while still in high school. This enables students to taste test the industry, eliminating careers that don't live up to their expectations and potentially saving employers substantial time and profits training disinterested young people.

The Federal and NSW governments have invested millions of dollars in building trade training centres and trade schools, including in Western Sydney. These cover industries including metals and engineering, business services, automotive, construction, health, entertainment, information technology and hospitality. When students graduate high school, they already have entry-level skills and a Certificate I or II in their chosen trade. Sometimes they are even on their way to completing a Certificate III.

Hundreds of students who have completed school or TAFE-delivered Industry Curriculum Framework courses, secure job offers and even full time positions with employers as a result of their one-week mandatory placements. The great benefit is that students are productive and profitable for companies from day one.

After Work Placement at Kanebridge Constructions

in September last year, Adam Hussain greatly impressed his host employer. He was offered a job and is now working with the company as a first-year apprentice. "I knew I wanted to do a job that involved working with my hands but if it wasn't for Work Placement, I wouldn't know what to do," he says. "It was the first time I had stepped onto a job site and I was surprised to see all the excavators and bobcats – it was the real deal." As part of his Year 11 studies at Kellyville High School, Adam undertook a Construction Certificate II at Nirimba TAFE. He says Work Placement gave him the chance to prove he was a committed worker. "I put in 110 per cent and I like to get the job done and keep the people I'm working with happy," says Hussain, who is interested in one day studying project management at university. "It's a great learning experience and I'm doing something new every day."

Kanebridge's Construction Manager Luke McCloskey says the program allows companies to see "what kind of person" a student is and their work ethic. "It was easy to see from day one Adam would be of great benefit to the company," he says.

Schools Industry Partnership CEO Ian Palmer says internal surveys of the NSW Work Placement program reveals 26 per cent of students are invited to apply for jobs with their host employers. Approximately 16 per cent of all Work Placement students gain employment directly through this process. Benefits to businesses hosting students include identifying and retaining local talent; creating good public relations opportunities; developing awareness between local businesses and young people; broadening the industry's skills base; and creating opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills.

In April this year Rebecca Marco became the first Work Placement student at The Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI). She says the staff made her feel so welcome, she is keen to be employed in a similar environment when she leaves school. "The work they did there was so inspirational as they would make discoveries about how to prevent or treat birth defects and diseases such as cancer, epilepsy and genetic disorders found in babies and young children," says the Catherine McAuley Business Services student. "I was so happy waking up knowing I would be going to a workplace where people want to be there, they enjoy what they are doing and they appreciated me being there and would give up their own work to help me benefit."


The Alliance arranges placements for up to 9,000 Work Placement students each year who attend

schools or TAFE colleges in the Parramatta, Blacktown, Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Penrith areas. Palmer says in the early 1970s, 80 per cent of students left school in Year 10. "Now more than 80 per cent stay on to Year 12," he says. "Global competition has greatly impacted on a lot of traditionally unskilled jobs, with many of these roles increasingly requiring a qualification."

This is where the Work Placement program comes in. Traditionally known as VET (Vocational Education & Training) courses, the Curriculum Framework courses, unlike conventional subjects, require mandatory work placements in both years 11 and 12, to satisfy competency requirements. With school retention numbers growing each year, contributed to by the Federal Government raising the leaving age to 17, work placements provide a positive alternative for many students who would have previously left school. The program also helps to target areas of skills shortages.

BREED Managing Director Stephen Frost says industry has needed to step up and assist schools to deliver what used to be addressed by government departments and large businesses in the past. "With privatisation, corporatisation, maximising the return to shareholders and government departments having to deliver a profit return to treasury, training in large organisations for young people has significantly dropped," Frost warns. "What used to be offered by industry for those students is being done at school but schools can't do it all – they aren't able to deliver hands-on industry experience."

According to the Federal Government's report, apprentices and trainees currently represent 25 per cent of the 1.7 million students enrolled in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system and 3.8 per cent of the entire workforce. The report says: "The importance of the system is highlighted by the fact that more than 1.2 million workers are represented in the technical and trade sector, which represents more than 13 per cent of the entire Australian workforce. ... Our findings show that although the Australian Apprenticeships System is not fundamentally broken, there are areas where the system should be reformed to allow it to meet the skills needs of the 21st century economy."

Frost says any improvements to the "system" need to start by engaging high school students, a recommendation he has shared directly with NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell. "I passionately believe the government needs to write it into their contracts, in tender documents, that in order for companies to be successful in gaining a contract, they must agree to take on work placement students." 

Where are They Now?

Just one week's work placement in a business is enough to change a young person's life. The following are three inspiring stories from former high school students enjoying their dream careers.

JULIE VOTANO

Julie Votano will never forget the day she was asked to prepare a meal for all the chefs in a busy kitchen. She was in Year 12 at the time and was on the last day of a week's work placement at Barnabys Restaurant in Parramatta.

"Cooking for chefs in a professional kitchen is a lot different to cooking at school with your friends around you," says Votano, who was completing Hospitality Operations – Commercial Cookery as part of her HSC. "I was really nervous but my risotto turned out pretty well, with a little help. That week was an eye-opening experience of what it would really be like working in the industry."

Votano's passion for cooking began at Our Lady of Mercy College in Parramatta where she enjoyed her Food Technology subject in her junior years and then her Hospitality Operations course in Years 11 and 12. Unlike a lot of her classmates in that course, her industry experience encouraged her to continue on her chosen career path, even with the negatives awaiting her of long, often anti-social work hours.

At school Votano also studied a second vocational course as part of her HSC – Retail Operations. However, the work placements were so boring she was turned off considering the industry as a serious option. "I was relegated to restocking shelves at a large department store for one entire week and the second placement involved the same thing at a large hardware store," she says. "I didn't get to see all parts of the business at all. Thankfully I was pretty confident I wanted to become a chef but this helped to make up my mind. My time in the restaurant was far more inspiring and exciting."

Votano's risotto and work ethic were obviously a hit as she was offered an apprenticeship at the end of her work placement. Although honoured to be given the opportunity after she completed her studies, Votano had high aspirations of working in a fine dining restaurant and declined the invitation. She printed off a dozen resumes and set to work identifying Sydney's best hatted restaurants.

"I walked into Guillaume at Bennelong restaurant at the Opera House," Votano recalls. "The owner and executive chef Guillaume Brahimi came out

and talked to me for 20 minutes and asked why I wanted to be a chef and if I had my family's support. He said he was happy to put me on as an apprentice but he'd like to give me a week's experience to see if I liked it."

Julie Votano

THEN: 2006 Work Placement



Kellie Ames

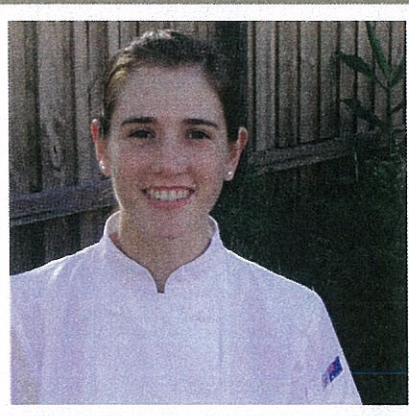
THEN: 2006 Work Placement



Votano thoroughly enjoyed the time and accepted the offer, spending the next three-and-a-half enjoyable years there, mentored by talented chef Jose Silva. "As a young girl coming from an all-girls Catholic school, entering that big kitchen was hard and intimidating but Jose was always so reassuring and I could always go to him for support," Votano says. "I later worked at Rockpool on George Street, one of Neil Perry's original restaurants, which was also such a good learning experience."

For the past year Votano has been working as a chef de patie at Sixpenny, a degustation restaurant at Stanmore that offers a six-to-eight course menu. "At my school there was such a big emphasis on going to university but that wasn't for me," says the now 25 year old. "I stuck to

NOW: Restaurant chef



NOW: Marketing Manager



my guns and followed my passion for cooking. Work placement made me realise being a chef was definitely for me. Every day you get to cook for people and make them happy – it's really satisfying."

KELLIE AMES

Like many other employees at Featherdale Wildlife Park, Marketing Manager Kellie Ames began her career at the popular tourist destination after a student work placement stint. Her days are

now spent promoting the home of 300 native Australian animals – featured in blockbuster movies *Australia* and *Crocodile Dundee* and Qantas' international advertising campaign.

Ames' journey began in the e-commerce department of Amalgamated Holdings, which owns Featherdale. She always harboured a dream of working with captive animals so in 2005 embarked on a Certificate II in Animal Studies at TAFE. As part of her course she had to complete a compulsory 40-hour work placement and Featherdale was her host employer.

"Six months later a position opened up at the park and they thought of me at head office because they knew I had completed the course and the work placement," says Ames, who had previously completed a Bachelor of Business, majoring in marketing. "I was able to get an interview and secured the position. Work placement really helped me to gain an insight into the industry. Although the role I secured was in marketing, I do get to raise young animals including agile wallaby joeys, eastern grey kangaroos and a wombat. At the moment I'm completing a captive animals course."

Kellie has been working with Amalgamated Holdings for 20 years this December – one of Australia's leading entertainment, hospitality, tourism and leisure companies. She started off on a cinema cleaning team as a 15-year-old school student, later worked on website content at the company's head office and progressed at Featherdale to her current position as marketing manager.

It's no surprise that Kellie is a big supporter of young people wanting to sample her industry. Each week Featherdale takes on three students for five days visits – those in Year 10 completing work experience and Years 11 and 12 Work Placement students undergoing primary industry, business, tourism and retail courses as part of their HSC. With more than 100 students to assist each year, Featherdale has a close relationship with local workplace service provider BREED. For more than 10 years BREED has been liaising between the park and local high schools and TAFE colleges, scheduling students and ensuring all documentation is in place. "We find many of our future Featherdale employees from the work experience and work placement students who pass through our doors," says Ames, whose park attracts more than 330,000 visitors each year. "Initiative, maturity and a willingness to work hard are key attributes we look for in an employee. We often find that students will bring a fresh perspective and new ideas which they

share during their week at Featherdale. We may be able to pass on many skills that will assist them with finding future employment, but often we learn something valuable from our students in return."

NATHAN HORSLEY


When Nathan Horsley turned up to his host employer for a week's work placement, he was shy and reserved but keen to learn all he could about the IT industry. Not only did the 17 year old thrive at BREED, he was named Work Placement Student of the Year and was spotted at the award ceremony by an employer who offered him a job.

"I was a bit of a lonely, shy boy who wouldn't sit and have a full conversation with someone but I'd be like 'let me at the work, I'll do what I need to do'," Horsley says. "I did work placement with a friend of mine Michael and we were given tools and 15 old computers to strip, work out what was wrong with them and then try to fix them. If we ever had any questions we'd have lots of support from the head of the organisation Stephen Frost or the onsite IT guy. Looking back on it now it was awesome – I really appreciate my time there as it was a stepping stone into the corporate world."

When Horsley finished his schooling at Bidwill Chifley College he took up an apprenticeship with the owner of the computer repair shop Z-tronics, the man who was impressed with him at the award

ceremony. After 18 months he was poached by a customer who specialised in databases – offering him the chance to further explore his interest in software, coding and writing script. Horsley worked on major projects including in the Premier's office and for Blue Scope Steel. He completed a four-year traineeship, including gaining a Diploma in Networking. He impressed his TAFE teachers so much they offered him a casual role as a teacher at Richmond TAFE.

"I was teaching Networks Certificate III and PC Support from 6pm to 9pm after work, while also studying myself," Horsley says of that busy time. After juggling the study, work and teaching load for one and a half years and working at the business for more than five years, Horsley decided it was time to go out on his own. In February this year he joined with two partners and set up "Action CRM" – a networking and database company servicing the Parramatta district.

"As a high school student I always hoped one day I'd run my own IT business but I didn't think it would happen at the age of 23," says Horsley. "I wouldn't have got where I am now without work placement. Sure there are students that might not embrace the opportunity like I did but there are others out there like me who wanted a future in the industry and wanted to do their best." 

TOP SUPERVISOR TIPS

Some businesses develop their own programs for Work Placement students while others take up the offer of support from Work Placement service providers. The Business Education Community Alliance has developed a range of resources and techniques to help employers develop a hosting program for students. This benefits not only the young people on placements but also employees who, in the majority of cases, are charged with showing students the ropes.

A simple yet powerful coaching technique to help students is to:

- Tell them about it
- Show them how it is done
- Watch them do it
- Praise what they did well
- Correct any shortcomings
- Repeat for practice

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."
– Confucius

A Rehearsal for Life

At Riverside Theatres students soon learn there's far more to putting on a show than turning on the lights in readiness for the actors to walk out on stage. In the multi-venue performing arts centre in the CBD of Parramatta, Work Placement students gain a quick appreciation of the diversity of tasks involved before the curtain goes up.

"Students do a whole range of stuff with us from bumping in, that is setting up a show, packing up a show, marketing mail-outs, organising advertising around the building, setting up microphones – there's nothing much they don't do," says Sean Clarke, Riverside's Technical Coordinator. "They are not put in cotton wool and allowed to do only the jobs and hours they want. They are literally an employee for the week so if we have a 7am bump in, provided they can get to the venue on time, they will start work at 7am."

Riverside has taken on more than 480 students over the past 10 years, usually hosting one a week. The Work Placement students studying Entertainment as part of their HSC are focussed on the technical aspects of a production rather than performance, learning elements such as lighting design, stage management and set design.

Riverside Theatres Director Robert Love says although it's not the purpose of the scheme, Work Placement is the first occasion his company has the chance to screen prospective employees. "From our point of view it's basically making sure there is a group of people who are interested in the industry, starting at HSC level," says Love. "It is important – you are actually refreshing your labour base really. You are seeing new people and not all of them are going to go on and do it as a profession. But occasionally there will be somebody who is so enthusiastic and really interested in the whole thing and possibly that may have been sparked by spending time here."

Clarke says two former Work Placement students who have been with Riverside for a few years are excellent technicians Brooke Shelton and Greg Lyons. He says: "Greg is one of my heavily-relied on staff because he is across all facets of the building and he is multi-skilled in lighting, sound and staging."

For Greg, the Work Placement opportunity five years ago was "everything". It not only earned him an employer-nominated "Award for Excellence in Entertainment", it ultimately landed him a rewarding career at Riverside. "My old man did



Sean Clarke, Grey Lyons and Robert Love in the Riverside Theatre

lighting for an amateur musical society and I was going along with him since I was two, watching the shows and eating lollies," says the now 23 year old. "When I had the opportunity to do the Entertainment course I jumped at it." Greg now enjoys mentoring current students. "It's awesome to see the kids who have some passion like I had, who aren't afraid to do the dirty work as well as the great work such as the opening nights of big shows."

Riverside hosts up to 700 events a year including musicals, play readings, film shoots, contemporary dance, and TV programs. Clarke says other venues in the theatre industry opt out of Work Placement because they wrongly believe it's going to be a drag on the company's resources. "But I can tell you from our relationship with AusSIP, they organise all the students' paperwork, make sure all the insurances are in place and they

check on the students – they are really like the HR department of Riverside as far as Work Placement goes," says Clarke who also mentors students and gives talks to schools.

Riverside sees the value in embracing young people by also employing an educational officer and operating venue tours for students. Love says it's important to acquaint people with the theatre who have shown some interest. "Some of them may never have attended a performance so coming here on Work Placement might be the first time they walk through the door and they may well walk back through it again," says Love, whose theatre also takes on business students. "There is an element of just introducing people to the fact we are here, both as a prospective employer but also letting them know they can come along and be entertained." **G**

Embracing Culinary Talent

Theo Stephens strongly supports the old saying "preparation is the key to success". The Human Resources Manager of the Novotel Sydney Parramatta hotel has been accepting a Hospitality Commercial Cookery student there every fortnight for five years. The partnership with local high schools has been so successful, Stephens encourages other businesses to explore their own opportunities.

Students also help prepare for functions, with the hotel boasting 11 function rooms and the largest ballroom in Western Sydney, seating up to 550 guests.

Stephens says the teenagers receive the same training as staff and are treated like real employees for the entire week. He finds the students usually arrive with a lot of reality TV cooking shows under their belts but they soon learn that life does not always imitate art. "It's not shouting and yelling and throwing pots and pans around the kitchen," says Stephens. "For us, having an enthusiastic

was allowed to help prepare for functions, develop valuable knife skills and provide input to the chefs. "I was even asked to try some food to see if it was seasoned correctly," says the William Clarke College student. "This surprised me as they valued my opinion and what I thought the food tasted like. I wasn't expecting to be given tasks that had as much creative freedom like making fruit plates with all the condiments on them, or setting up the cakes for functions."

Executive chef Shibu Madathil believes the Work Placement program is "fantastic". "Kids can see



Novotel Executive Chef Shibu Madathil with student Erin Spelman

"I just think businesses need to give it a go and have a look at the talent that is out there at the moment," he says. "It's important for organisations to get behind young people and give them the opportunity to mix with professionals, talk to them and ask questions."

At the Novotel Sydney Parramatta Work Placement students work in the professional kitchen alongside the experts, doing a lot of preparation work, cracking "thousands of eggs" and showing their artistic flair in plating up meals.

student, very keen to work in an industrial kitchen, is really contagious. That rubs off on everybody. Our staff members like to deliver training as well and pass on their knowledge to up and coming people in the industry. The students have an opportunity to really create and that's what they find extremely satisfying."

Arriving for Work Placement at the Novotel in May, Erin Spelman believed she would spend most of her week washing dishes or doing a lot of repetitive work. Instead, she was amazed she

the everyday workings of the industry and find out if it's for them," he says. "My staff enjoy helping the students."

Keeping the door open to potential future employees is something the hotel's management always keeps in mind. Stephens says: "We do try to let the enthusiastic kids know that they are more than welcome when they leave school to send in a resume and cover letter and we will consider their application." **G**

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The following organisations are honoured for their leading role in helping prepare students for the workforce. Education-business partnerships are the best way for students to discover the relevance of their studies and to develop essential vocational skills. On behalf of the students, families and schools of Western Sydney, we thank you for your ongoing support.

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S

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Super Cheap Auto North
Parramatta

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T

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U

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V

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W

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Westpac Parramatta

Whispers Cafe on One

Wild Cat Café

Wilkinsons Real Estate Riverstone

Wilkinsons Real Estate,
Richmond

Wilkinsons Real Estate, Windsor

Windsor Animal Shelter

Windsor High School

Windsor Home Store

Windsor RSL

Winford Motors

Winmalee Care Care

Winmalee High School

Wise Employment

Wiseberry Prospect

Wiseberry Thompson's

Wiseman's Book Pty Ltd

Woodfire Blacktown

Woodford Homes Pty Ltd

Woolworths

Woolworths Pty Ltd Richmond

Woolworths Pty Ltd Windsor

Workplace Safety Centre

WPC Group

WSI TAFE Multicultural Education
Unit

WSROC

Wycliffe Christian School

Y

Young Achievers Early Learning
Centre

Your Cafe

Youth Off The Streets

Z

Zac Homes

Signal Travel

Zokoko

Z-Tronics



PARTNERSHIP BROKERS
SCHOOL * BUSINESS * COMMUNITY

United We Stand

Meeting local challenges head on while working collaboratively across Western Sydney is something that makes the Business Education Community Alliance an influential partnership. It covers an area that includes almost 45,000 secondary students in government, Catholic and independent schools as well as 1,350 students attending technical or further education.

"Kids are kids, they are wearing different uniforms and have different backgrounds but at the end of the day they have the same issues that prevail no matter what – they all come with their own challenges and opportunities," says John Watters, Executive Officer of the Alliance's Parramatta arm, the Australian Schools Industry Partnership (AusSIP). "We are three separate businesses but we have been able to cooperate and collaborate in a competitive environment to address issues that transcend borders. If more businesses and schools did the same thing, that's when you'd see all the advantages."

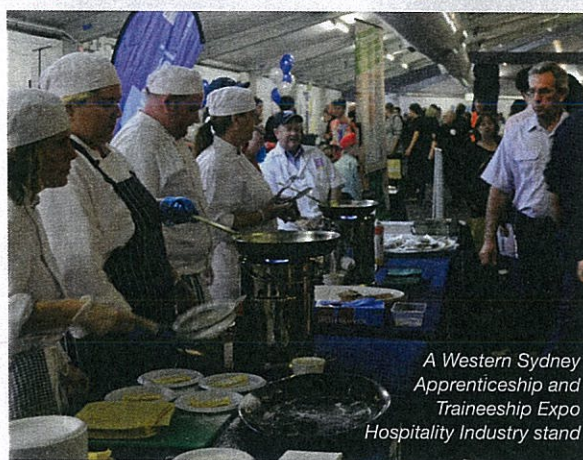
The three member organisations – AusSIP, BREED and the Schools Industry Partnership (SIP) – have been working together informally for 15 years but legally formed an association to cement their collaboration four years ago. They train their staff together, including in occupational health and safety, risk management and child protection. Working with employers, the Alliance has been successful in creating a 32-page, full colour Student Work Placement Journal that is offered free to schools, replacing a diverse range of ad-hoc photocopied versions. The Journal helps to prepare Years 11 and 12 students for their placement with a business, and importantly, provides them with an effective way of capturing the key skills and insights they gain along the way.

A prime example of the effectiveness of the Alliance is the success of the Western Sydney Apprenticeship and Traineeship Expo. This started out as a small event run by a few Western Sydney career advisers but is now the largest of its kind in NSW. The Expo's leading partners are Apprenticespower, an organisation that specialises in traineeships and apprenticeships across Sydney; the Western Sydney Institute of TAFE; and the Nepean Careers Forum. The Expo will this year be staged at Penrith Panthers Exhibition Marquee on September 3.

Exhibitors represent industry, individual businesses, group training companies and



Practical fun at Try a Skill



A Western Sydney Apprenticeship and Traineeship Expo Hospitality Industry stand

is the growth and success of Try a Skill, formerly known as Try a Trade, and most recently staged from June 24 to 25. In this huge two-day event, thousands of high school students are bussed in to Kevin Betts Stadium, Mt Druitt, from all over Sydney. Employers and TAFE teachers offer students practical activities in a wide range of skills including welding, hair dressing, beauty, IT, nursing, spray painting and child care.

registered training organisations who share career opportunities and pathways with more than 15,000 young people and their parents. The Expo also acts as a preliminary recruitment drive, with organisations collecting resumes from career seekers. SIP CEO Ian Palmer says the Expo works so well as it's a night event where parents are encouraged to come along with their kids.

"The mantra is 'bring your resume, bring your pen, bring your parents'," says Palmer. "Research shows about 80 per cent of young people seek out parents to have a conversation about what school subjects they should choose and what careers they should pursue. On the flipside, about 80 per cent of parents don't feel prepared for these conversations – what the pathways are and what is out there today."

Another example of the Alliance's positive impact

A study conducted by AusSIP of 3,000 students who attended Try a Skill over three years, revealed 87 per cent of students had an increased understanding of the world of work, while 86 per cent indicated the event improved their career planning. Try a Skill has the added bonus of inspiring and re-engaging young people who have left the school system early.

BREED Managing Director Stephen Frost says the positive impact of major events that target young people is a testament to the success of business and community partnerships. "We have different backgrounds and qualifications but we have the same underlying desire to help young people," Frost says. "By combining the best of what we have all got, it has to be good for the kids." **G**

Linking the Key Players

A major part of the Alliance's work is running the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program along with more than 100 other providers across Australia. In the recent Federal Budget it was announced the Program had been extended for another 12 months. This follows a recent evaluation report which shows that for every \$1 invested by the Government, partnership brokers have been the catalyst for up to \$5.50 of created social value.

One successful initiative organised by SIP for Cranebrook High School has been the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) which involves the school executive, teachers, parents, businesses and community members. Modelled on a proven US program, ATP goals include enhancing student learning and promoting student retention and engagement.

"Maths Deadlys" has been a highly-successful ATP project designed to develop the numeracy skills of young Indigenous students from local partner primary schools. Staged for the first time at Cranebrook High in September last year, a second event was held earlier this year and

schools, the community and business. "They are such fun days of exciting numeracy activities, electronic buzzers, prizes, balloons and all sorts of wonderful things for the students to see maths as interesting and important," Summerhayes says. "Our high school students ran the competition and helped to tutor the younger children leading up to the events. It is one of those wonderful celebrations connecting communities together. We had parents getting involved who had never come near a school since their own schooling." **G**

Participating Maths Deadlys school students, principals and parents celebrate a successful first event



The Program's goals include achieving 90 per cent Year 12 attainment by 2015 or the vocational equivalent; closing the gap for the Indigenous population; social inclusion (for refugees and other socially-marginalised groups); and addressing skills shortages. Schools Industry Partnership (SIP) CEO Ian Palmer says the Alliance concentrates its energy on "where there is the greatest need", including some school populations with substantial socio and economic challenges that may only be achieving 50 per cent Year 12 attainment.

several more interschool activities are planned.

Cranebrook High School Principal Deb Summerhayes says the University of Western Sydney has been very supportive of the project and is helping to seek funding to expand it nationally. She says the Maths Deadlys is a great show of camaraderie among seven



Young Maths Deadlys competitors in action

Rebuilding Connections

Students who are struggling to stay engaged in school are being targeted in a highly-successful program funded by the NSW Department of Education and Communities. The Independent Employment Adviser (IEA) program involves taking a group of 15-20 "at risk" Year 9 to 12 high school students offsite from a selection of schools.

BREED Managing Director Stephen Frost says one of the key advantages of the IEA program is the fact it involves both group work and one-on-one case management. This dual approach assists students to re-engage in the school environment or make a smooth transition into alternative education and training, or employment.

"The program's success is also down to the team member delivering it, having the right staff to empathise with the kids who are

realise and understand what they need to do to ensure future success, whether this is to complete their HSC or pursue alternate pathways as they move confidently into the workforce," she says.

Cranebrook High School Principal Deb Summerhayes says the impact of a recent IEA program – the "Bricks and Block" course, was incredible for her students. "A trained brickie worked with a group of boys over two days," she says. "They built a garden and a barbeque area for



Students enjoying the IEA program's "Bricks and Block" course

The young people learn the value of team work and communication skills through hands-on activities, while also exploring career interests and apprenticeship and traineeship options. Helping students see the relevance between school and work is one of the program's key goals, as is helping them with resume and portfolio preparation and transition plans.

participating," says Frost. "Having smaller groups you can have personal relationships with the kids and really relate to them."

Glenwood High School has embraced the IEA program over a number of years with Principal Eria McMaster saying it enables students to reconnect with their own goals and future pathways. "We've found after the students have taken part they

the school and even the disengaged Year 10 boys who don't enjoy school that much, were going home and talking to their mums and dads about how great school was. A number of those boys are now interested in pursuing a career in that area. That kind of stuff is worth its weight in gold for our students." **G**

From Disengaged to A Budding Entrepreneur

At his first high school Thomas struggled to find relevance in what he was learning, feeling disconnected from his lessons and teachers. Unfortunately the same scenario was played out at his new school. Last year the Year 10 Evans High School student was referred to the Independent Employment Adviser program, meeting with other students once a week for a period of ten weeks.

Thomas and his peers learned about employability skills and their individual strengths and weaknesses. They also worked together to create a plan for career pathways including learning interview techniques, and resume and personal presentation.

"The goal is to re-engage the students through leadership training, teach them to work within a team and to build relationships," says Stephen


Frost from BREED. "After working with Thomas and building a strong bond with him, we set out to make changes in his cooperation with his teachers and fellow students, which was successful. Thomas has strong leadership qualities which were identified early on. He wasn't using his strengths in a positive way and was distancing himself from the general student population."

Once he completed the IEA program, Thomas was kept engaged and continued with his positive learning experiences by participating in the ANZ Young Entrepreneurs Program. Facilitated by Partnership Brokers, this program teaches students key business skills with the assistance and coaching from ANZ managers. Thomas' team appointed him team leader of the "Kings Car Wash" micro business where he was responsible for writing business plans, sourcing cleaning materials and managing the business. He took his responsibilities very seriously and teachers soon saw a different side to him.

"Thomas knew he wanted to continue his education whilst also working doing something

with his hands," says Frost. "He decided to focus his interests and try refrigeration mechanics." A week's work experience was organised for Thomas with a local refrigeration mechanic. He impressed his host employer to such an extent he was offered an apprenticeship for 2013.

The IEA program also offered Thomas and his peers help with:

- Employer expectations
- Communication skills
- Teamwork
- Industry work placement
- HSC schooling options
- VET and TVET options
- Mentoring
- School-based apprenticeship and traineeship options
- Introductions to in-school support including careers advisors, councillors, the welfare team, homework groups and tutoring
- Project-based learning 



IEA Tour of Mt Druitt TAFE 2012



EDUCATION-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS: WHAT'S IN IT FOR EVERYONE?

Q: How valuable is it for schools to partner with businesses to help prepare students for the transition from school to work, training or further study?

CHRISTINE CAWSEY:

A: It's invaluable. For many young people school doesn't have a lot of relevance. A lot of them struggle to see the meaningfulness for what they're doing. They live very adult lives outside of school for lots of social reasons – it's a very low SES community with a lot of fractured families. The students have to then turn up to school and fit into the school community which can be a challenge. Finding ways to connect them with the adult world keeps them in education. It also helps us buck the State trends with our results. For example, we have more Aboriginal students who complete the HSC, get traineeships and go out into the world of work. We're doing something right.

My experience after 15 years here, is that a school-business partnership isn't only about the student transitioning, that's a critical one, but in fact the relationship can be built before that. For instance our school has a program called SALSA which stands for Students as Lifestyle Activists. It's funded by the NAB Schools First grant. We've received a number of other grants over the years including our AFL Indigenous Academy. It's a great program and ended up leading to our relationship with the Giants Football Club. Through BREED we now have two boys doing school-based traineeships with the Giants. If you want to give people in the community a view of what 21st century schooling is like, there are no better ambassadors than our young people who are working in industry as part of their school learning and beyond.

DEB SUMMERHAYES:

A: Business-education partnerships are absolutely vital. We believe it takes a village to raise a child and if we are truly talking about educating people to be contributing members of 21st century society we need to have all the stakeholders working together to best support young people, particularly getting them ready for life after school. Actually making the curriculum relevant, and connecting what

students are learning in the classroom to the skills they will need in the future, is really important.

This is the start of my seventh year as principal and I've been involved in business partnerships over that time. It has evolved into a very important part of our school now. Our relationship with the Schools Industry Partnership particularly over the past two years has led to our Action Team for Partnerships which is a group made up of parents, the community, businesses and outside agencies who support the Cranebrook community. We meet regularly and talk about special projects for the school and how to involve business more in different activities we want to do with our students. That has been incredibly successful for a school environment which doesn't traditionally get a big take-up from our parent body. When you have those successes celebrated and acknowledged people actually see the benefit of getting more involved in the school.

ERLA MCMASTER:

A: We know the business community wants people to come into the workforce with solid 21st century skills – to think critically, to be creative, collaborative and to have good communication skills. In the classroom we focus on developing these skills in students. When this focus is validated by members of the business community it reinforces the relevance of what we do in the classroom.

Our curriculum is moving towards the reliance upon project-based learning. This enables students to become involved in a design project where they work in groups to undertake 'real-life tasks'. When the business community becomes involved it adds another significant dimension to the students' learning. It gives them further impetus to give their absolute best effort to impress those from the wider community. In many ways students truly value the assessment from the business community as it enriches their understanding of the real world. Having someone from the workforce or in a business assessing their work also authenticates what teachers and students are doing in the classroom. I think it is invaluable feedback for our students and also gives them the opportunity to experience the workplace first hand.

Q: In what ways can businesses help schools and students?

CHRISTINE CAWSEY:

A: One of the ways I think businesses can help school students – certainly the kids in Western Sydney – is just by giving a kid a go. That's why the relationship with a school or a group of schools is so critical because once an employer has had success with one school, they're often willing to come back to that same school and say "look we have some opportunities for young people and we'd like to give you another offer".

Businesses can help schools by being open in their ideas on what young people can bring to the table from a diversity of backgrounds and also helping the kids with mentoring. I'm not sure most businesses realise that most principals are running a medium-sized enterprise. I've got a hundred staff on site everyday and all of the things that go with that. Where business can be helpful is to recognise the skill set particularly of the people leading the school but the other part is to be open. For example "how do you do that because this is how we do it, does that work for you?" I think establishing reciprocity is one of the things that can be most useful because everyone has something to learn from each other.

DEB SUMMERHAYES:

A: We actually have a five-year relationship with the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The ABC project allows people from the ABC – from the person who cleans the floors through to the general manager – to actually come in and speak to our kids about the work they do and the preparation they need to do at school to be work-ready. There are work experience opportunities but we also have some people from the ABC, often very well known people, who will come out and give lectures and tutorials to teachers and students around particular areas. Peter Longman, for example, who's a very famous sports journalist, now one of the managers in the ABC, has a great relationship with our school. He comes a couple of times each year and gives workshops for students and teachers on how to interview and tips on the sorts of jobs students might be interested in that can use those skills.



CHRISTINE CAWSEY
Principal
Rooty Hill High School



ERLA MCMASTER
Principal
Glenwood High School



DEB SUMMERHAYES
Principal
Cranebrook High School

We have a project on at the moment where we have a retired television producer from Compass and Four Corners, Peter Dunn. He comes in and talks to kids about filmmaking, using the medium our kids use such as iPhone 4. The students have chosen a person who works at the ABC and are making a film about their job, a sort of a "day in the life". We've got cameramen, Juanita Phillips from the newsroom – a variety of people. Eight films are going to be shared with schools across the country so if you are interested in this job, this is what the person's day looks like and it's our kids that are doing it. We have students from Year 7 through to Year 12 involved.

Last year our construction kids worked with Laing O'Rourke over a number of weeks where they designed and built a community garden in the wider Cranebrook community. We had engineers, builders, all those heavyweights from Laing O'Rourke coming in and working with our kids. At the end of it, one of our boys was actually offered a traineeship, and the students, teacher and the Laing O'Rourke representatives involved in the construction won an award.

ERLA MCMASTER:

A: Businesses support schools and students in a variety of ways. The opportunity to experience the workforce before the end of school helps students consolidate their understanding of workplace expectations and gives particular insight into professions of interest to them. Similarly, businesses offer support through sponsorship and mentoring which adds value to the community and creates a sense of belonging.

Glenwood High School has developed partnerships with the industry around us, particularly as we're very close to the Norwest Business Park. We are developing relationships with Woolworths, which sponsors some of our sporting teams. Similarly, the Outback Steakhouse is wonderful in providing sponsorship and allowing students to work with them.

Another great partnership which started this year, with the help of AusSIP, is the Community Mentoring Program which has already been very successful at a neighbouring school. The program taps into the community and enables you to

match a student in Year 11 with somebody in the workforce in an area of their interest. Once a month the mentors have breakfast with the students at the school. For an hour they sit and talk about opportunities, how to set goals, how to develop skills and to realise their potential to ensure future success. The mentors and students are trained by the staff running the program so they can make the most of their time together.

Q: What advantages are there for businesses (both employers and employees) to partner with schools?

CHRISTINE CAWSEY:

A: One of the things that businesses themselves get out of the engagement is a real understanding of where young people are at as opposed to how the media only seem to portray adolescents as two things – either victims or perpetrators. The perplexity of a young person today is rarely understood. The more business engages with young people, the more they see how wonderful they actually are which I think gives great hope for the future.

One of the partnerships our school has is with one of the big law firms and we have 40 students being mentored. They just do it for 12 months and when it's over they have a mentor in a legal firm with whom they can talk openly with about their plans and goals. The students also get to have that experience of travelling to the city. We're in the tenth year of this program and one of the things lawyers say to us, is they really feel they are helping the students and giving back to the community.

When our young people go to work or are in traineeships and someone's teaching them what to do and mentoring them, that person is also reviewing, refining and reflecting on their own skill set which is a benefit to the organisation as well. For a company, it can also be another recruitment strategy. I'm always amazed at the number of students offered employment directly as a result of work placement or work experience relationships.

DEB SUMMERHAYES:

A: People who come in and work with our kids are quite amazed by the experience and often say

things like "I so enjoyed speaking to these young people. It gave me such a sense of satisfaction to actually be able to enhance their knowledge, give some direction and help a child focus on what it is they may or may not want to do". They also may say to a student "You know what mate, don't go mucking around in that class. You told me you wanted to be a carpenter but mate I had to do this level of maths". Those conversations are very powerful because they're not coming from a teacher, they're coming from someone in the field.

So many times I read in the media about employers complaining that schools don't prepare kids for the world of work, and schools don't do this and that but I think everyone has a responsibility. Employers need to tell us what they are looking for in employees – the sorts of things they want employees to be able to do and how we can make sure our students are work-ready. With our partnership with Laing O'Rourke we had a lot of disengaged boys in that construction class but they ended up turning up in their work readiness uniforms ready to go and these men were like, "this is great – we actually feel like we're making a difference in a child's life".

ERLA MCMASTER:

A: Businesses benefit through school partnerships as they are able to develop a more realistic understanding of the tremendous potential of today's youth. When working with teenagers they are able to identify the strengths of that particular generation and tap into their skills.

At Glenwood High School we run Australian Business Week every year for Year 10. Students work in groups to design and market a product based on a theme or a common idea. Businesses share marketing techniques and business plans whilst helping develop work-related skills. The businesses then return at the end of the week to judge student designs and marketing skills during a Trade Show display. It's valuable for business to be able to see the talent amongst the students as well as develop their own mentoring skills. This empowers the business industry as they 'give back' to the community. They work towards building the society of tomorrow with the youth of today. The business world can support schools by creating a real audience for students to

demonstrate their skills of creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Q: How has your local Work Placement service provider and Partnership Broker benefited your school?

CHRISTINE CAWSEY:

A: Much of what happens is because BREED shows our school there's an opportunity and they encourage everyone to give it a go. They have been a wonderful workplace service provider. It's such a benefit for schools to not have to go out and find all of their own workplace opportunities for students. They provide those links with industry for you – that's a fantastic partnership.

I was pretty amazed at the number of people who have already written to me to say how happy they were that funding is continuing for the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program. BREED also has an Independent Employment Advisor Service and they generally work with reasonably "at risk" kids. They currently help a small group of our kids, about 10 students in Year 10, who spend one day a fortnight with them.

DEB SUMMERHAYES:

A: The Schools Industry Partnership (SIP) has been outstanding. I was overjoyed when I heard they had received funding in the Federal Budget for another 12 months. They've helped us build those bridges to business because as an educator it's not an easy leap for me to knock on someone's door or call to say who I am. As well as brokering those partnerships, the SIP team has also come in and assisted us with writing submissions to get funding for projects and they also work with our kids and teachers.


It's been a great way for us to build our skills and also the confidence of my staff. It's not just me working with SIP, my staff know the people who support our school really well and they can ring and say, "I'm thinking of this project, I'm thinking of this class, I'm thinking of this kid. What do I do next?". For example, I didn't know how to connect this wonderful girl who has amazing skills with someone who works in the science profession at a high level. SIP was vital in connecting me with the

right people that allowed us to make sure this girl had a great opportunity.

ERLA MCMASTER:

A: The strongest partnership we have is with AusSIP – they are a fantastic body. They provide all the services schools do not have the time to access. Teachers are very busy. They have to focus on the educational program we are working on all the time; we have the content of the syllabus to get through; and we don't have the resources or staff to go out and source all of these different experiences for the students.

I can't stress enough how much we value the support, the knowledge and advice AusSIP

provides and that's particularly with our VET courses which are run within the school. They organise the work placements for us which is something that would require extra resources and energy within the school which we don't have. AusSIP have the contacts within the business community and they have an understanding of how businesses work, so they can easily link particular students with particular organisations. For students in our Hospitality and IT Services VET courses, AusSIP finds them a work placement and looks after them. To have that extra backstop from someone who understands the industry, the student and the schooling environment, is a wonderful service. 

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BENEFIT?

If you are interested in entering into a partnership or offering your expertise in any way, please contact your local Partnership Broker:

BREED

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Alternatively, you can find a partnership broker at www.transitions.youth.gov.au/sites/transitions